

Submitted by
Ryan Bates



American Arab
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Statement from the American-Arab Chamber of Commerce Regarding E-Verify, HB 4024 and HB 4026

The American-Arab Chamber of Commerce Represents 1,300 businesses in Michigan and the United States. Our members are not only important employers, innovators, and job-providers, but community leaders working to ensure that the American Dream remains strong for all our families.

We are deeply concerned that HB 4024 and 4026 would add yet more burdensome regulation to business in Michigan, hampering our ability to create jobs and economic growth.

Not only is E-Verify an additional hurdle to job creation, it is an ineffective program. It fails to identify unauthorized workers as often as it identifies them. It has an unacceptably high rate of identifying legal immigrant workers and naturalized United States Citizens as unauthorized—depending on the job category and immigration status of the applicant, these rates can be thirty to fifty times higher than in the general population. Certainly members of the Arab-American community will be among those disproportionately likely to have their ability to work unjustly hampered by this legislation.

This sort of discriminatory, overly-bureaucratic approach does nothing to address the real problem—our broken immigration system. Our antiquated and burdensome immigration system has kept Arab families split apart for many years, sometimes decades, waiting for visa approvals. The extremely limited number of high-skill work visas has hampered the ability of educated professionals to bring their talents to the United States and help build the growing health, education, and technology sectors. Students come from all across the world to take advantage of Michigan's excellent universities, and then they are expelled, unable to use their new knowledge to help create jobs in Michigan. Burdensome refugee and asylum requirements make it difficult for families fleeing troubled areas to take shelter in the United States. And finally, there is no way for those who have lost their immigration status, but are otherwise honest, tax-paying, contributing members of our community, to earn the right to stay in the United States.

These fundamental issues must be addressed comprehensively before any sort of employment verification system is put in place. That system must also be effective, and free of the errors that plague E-Verify.

Our Chamber is also deeply concerned about how the debate over this legislation is setting a tone in our public life. We know from our own experience that immigrants are engines of economic growth and that one of Michigan's strategies for revival must be increased immigration. We certainly have many challenges and misconceptions about Michigan to overcome when enticing new immigrant entrepreneurs, investors or skilled workers. To accomplish this, we must truly invest in building a reputation as a welcoming state. This legislation does exactly the opposite. HB 4024 and HB 4026 tell the world that we view immigrants with hostility and suspicion. Certainly this is not a message that Michigan can afford, and certainly not for a flawed program like E-Verify.